

6.

On the 12th October 1612, there was entered at Stationers' Hall "a book called the Essays of Sir Francis Bacon, Knight, the King's Solicitor General."² This was a new edition of the Essays of 1597, much enlarged, which Bacon had meant to dedicate to the Prince of Wales, and had written the dedicatory letter. The death of the

² See Bacon's *Essays* edited by W. A. Wright, 1862: Preface, p. x.

Prince on the 6th of November prevented him : but the letter has been preserved. A fair copy of it, in the hand of the transcriber of the manuscript volume of *Essays*¹ which I have described in my edition of the 'Literary Works' (vol. i. p. 535), may be seen among the Additional MSS. in the British Museum, vol. 4259 : and the watermark of the paper shows that it originally belonged to that volume. Therefore, though it is without signature, and though there are no marks of Bacon's own hand upon this one leaf, it may be safely accepted not only as undoubtedly authentic, but as the last and best copy.

TO THE MOST HIGH AND EXCELLENT PRINCE, HENRY, PRINCE OF WALES, DUKE OF CORNWALL, AND EARL OF CHESTER.²

It may please your Highness,

Having divided my life into the contemplative and active part, I am desirous to give his Majesty and your Highness of the fruits of both, simple though they be.

To write just treatises requireth leisure in the writer, and leisure in the reader, and therefore are not so fit, neither in regard of your Highness' princely affairs, nor in regard of my continual services ; which is the cause that hath made me choose to write certain brief notes, set down rather significantly than curiously, which I have called *Essays*. The word is late, but the thing is ancient. For Seneca's epistles to Lucilius, if one mark them well, are but *Essays*, that is, dispersed meditations, though conveyed in the form of epistles. These labours of mine I know cannot be worthy of your Highness, for what can be worthy of you ? But my hope is, they may be as grains of salt, that will rather give you an appetite than offend you with satiety. And although they handle those things wherein both men's lives and their pens are most conversant, yet (what I have attained I know not) but I have endeavoured to make them not vulgar, but of a nature whereof a man shall find much in experience, and little in books ; so as they are neither repetitions nor fancies. But howsoever, I shall most humbly desire your Highness to accept them in gracious part, and to conceive, that if I cannot rest, but must shew my dutiful and devoted affection to your Highness in these things which proceed from myself, I shall be much more ready to do it in performance of any your princely

¹ Harl. MSS. 5106.

² Addl. MSS. 4259, f. 155.

commandments. And so wishing your Highness all princely felicity I rest,

Your Highness's most humble servant.

The Prince himself being removed beyond the reach of essays and dedications and all human services, it remained for Bacon to do a small service to his memory (in which the surviving world had an interest) by setting down a remembrance of his character. As he wrote it in Latin, and made no other use of it so far as we know, it has been conjectured with great probability that he meant it for De Thou to use in his history. It is a careful study of the man—an attempt to describe or make out what he was worth and what he was, by diligent examination of such personal traits as had come within Bacon's observation or knowledge; and though short, contains all that we can be said to know about him. We have no account of him from any of his familiars, if he had any. The sayings or doings which have been recorded of him are few and of no great significance. And the vague and featureless eulogies in which his memory was celebrated at the time, and with which history seems to be still content, tell us nothing but that people of all classes hoped great things of him: which was an inevitable incident of his position. From a well conducted and personable prince of 19, who had never had an opportunity of engaging in any public action that could give either satisfaction or offence, every man could hope what he pleased, and each hoped what he wished. If his brother Charles had died before he was 20, I have little doubt that he would have died with as general regret, and that the fairest hopes of the country would as generally have been thought to have died with him. Bacon was never in any intimate relation with Prince Henry, but he had of course studied him diligently and curiously according to his opportunities, and in this paper we have a full, and to all appearance a candid and unreserved, report of the result of his study. It will be found among the *Literary Works*, vol. i. p. 319, with a translation and a preface.